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OCI No. 0487/76
8 April 1976

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Nigeria's Request That Secretary Kissinger's
Visit Be Postponed

1. On Monday, the Nigerian Ambassador to the US called at the State Department to request that Secretary Kissinger not visit Nigeria during his coming Africa trip. The ambassador gave two reasons:

--More treason trials are expected in the latter half of April and the Nigerian government could not be certain the Secretary would be totally free of embarrassment.

--The security situation in Lagos is a very touchy public issue and the Secretary's presence at this time would run too many risks.

The ambassador added that the Nigerian government had looked forward to the Secretary's visit as helping to improve US-Nigerian relations and wished it could take place at a later date.

2. We have no evidence that the Nigerians wished deliberately to snub the Secretary or the US government, and believe that Lagos would in fact like to see some improvement in US-Nigerian relations. Over the past months, however, the regime has allowed the Nigerian press to castigate the US--first over the Angola issue, and then over alleged CIA involvement in the February 13 abortive coup. With respect to the allegations against the CIA, the Nigerian government has concluded that they are false, but has looked upon the press allegations and anti-US student demonstrations that accompanied them, as safety valves and distractions from the dangerous tribal animosities that were surfaced by the attempted coup. Having allowed these anti-US emotions free reign, the regime might well have concluded that a visit at this time by a high US official would be an embarrassment.

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State Department review completed

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to the Nigerian leadership. Such a calculation may well have figured in its decision against the visit. Nonetheless, we believe the regime's continuing preoccupation with security matters, tribal tensions surfaced by the coup attempt, and its genuine concerns about the Secretary's safety were the primary reasons for the request that the Secretary pass up Lagos.

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